

No list is definitive. Just a few years ago, a roster of African-American classical composers might have missed Florence Price—even though her music is increasingly heard at orchestras today. Price burst on the scene with great fanfare in 1933 when no less than the Chicago Symphony Orchestra gave the premiere of her *Symphony No. 1*. Price continued to compose and her works continued to be performed, but seldom again by such prominent ensembles. After her death in 1953, her music pretty much vanished from concert halls. It took the 2009 discovery of some of her scores in a run-down Illinois property to bring renewed attention to Price and her work—which in turn led to the current blossoming of performances of her music. All of which is to say that although the list of nearly 100 black composers on the cover of this issue of *Symphony* hopes to be comprehensive—it runs from historical figures like Joseph Bologne, the Chevalier de Saint-Georges, who was a peer of Mozart, to contemporary composers like Jessie Montgomery and Nkeiru Okoye—it is necessarily contingent. There are more classical composers of color than can fit on the cover of one issue of one magazine.

Black composers were strikingly underrepresented at American orchestras for decades, but now a surge of interest in their works is leading to more performances, more commissions, more perspectives, more music. That cultural shift reflects larger societal movements sweeping the country as well as the growing expectation that orchestras—onstage and off—look like the communities they serve. Our cover story reports on where things stand now and asks if these developments will endure going forward.

*Robert Sandla*



## Classical Action

Performing Arts Against AIDS

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### Classical Action: Performing Arts Against AIDS

is a not-for-profit organization which draws upon the talents, resources and generosity of the performing arts community to raise funds for AIDS-related services across the United States. Funds are raised through special events, private house concerts, recording and merchandising projects, individual donations, and foundation and corporate support.

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# symphony

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### about the cover

A partial list of names of black composers from the past and present just scratches the surface of a wide range of orchestral music that audiences hear only infrequently. On page 20, Rosalyn Story delves into the history of this music, and asks today's composers and conductors what the future might hold. Cover design by Michael Rush